

## Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 PM-07 NSC-10 SPC-03 SS-20 RSC-01

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00 L-03 EB-11 AID-20

OMB-01 TRSE-00 NEA-10 FAA-00 COME-00 ACDA-19 DRC-01

PRS-01 /153 W

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R 311755Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1633

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USMISSION NATO

S E C R E T ROME 11988

E.O. 11652: XGDS-CLASSIFICATION DETERMINED BY DCM

TAGS: PFOR, MT, LY, US, IT

SUBJECT: MALTA FIR

REF: ROME 11802 11867

1. MORE COMPLETE PICTURE ON MINTOFF'S LATEST GAMBIT WAS PROVIDED TODAY VY VICE DIRGEN POLAFF ITALIAN FONMINISTRY. INFORMATION REF-TELS WAS BASED ON TELECON MINTOFF/DUCCI (ITALIAN DIRGEN POLAFF) IN WHICH MINTOFF TOLD DUCCI THAT (A) MINTOFF BADLY NEEDED FUNDS TO MAKE UP LOSS DUE TO DEVALUATION OF POUND AND FAILURE OF BRITISH TO COMPENSATE MALTA, (B) QADHAFI PREPARED TO HELP MALTA IN ANY WAY APPROPRIATE, AND (C) MINTOFF READY TO TRANSFER MALTA FIR CENTER TO TRIPOLI IN RETURN FOR LIBYAN ASSISTANCE UNLESS ITALY ABLE TO OBTAIN PROMPT ALLIED OR BRITISH ACTION TO GIVE MALTA WHAT MINTOFF SEES AS ITS JUST DUE.

2. DUCCI POINTED OUT THAT ITALIAN FONMIN MORO OUT OF THE COUNTRY (WITH PRES LEONE ON VISIT TO BENELUX COUNTRIES) AND WOULD NOT BE AVAILABLE TO CONSIDER MATTER UNTIL NOV 2. DUCCI URGED PATIENCE.

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3. WITH REGARD TECHNICALITIES OF POSSIBLE TRANSFER, SOURCE SAID ITALIAN TECHNICAL OPINION HOLDS THAT BILATERAL TRANSFER NOT POSSIBLE IN VIEW OF JAN AFIRAN CONFERENCE DECISION TO DIVIDE MALTA FIR, REMOVING TRIPOLI FROM MALTA FIR IN PROCESS. WERE MALTA AND TRIPOLI FIR'S TO BE MERGED, HOWEVER, THE TRANSFER OF FIR CONTROL CENTER FROM VALLETTA TO TRIPOLI COULD BE DONE WITHOUT BY YOUR LEAVE FROM ANY THIRD PARTIES. SOURCE SPECULATED THAT FIRST STEP MIGHT BE PROPOSAL TO RECONSOLIDATE THE TWO FIR'S, WITHOUT REFERENCE TO LOCATION OF CONTROL CENTER. THIS WOULD TAKE A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF TIME AND DUE PROCESS, BUT IT COULD HARDLY BE OPPOSED, SINCE IN PRINCIPLE ICAO PREFERS LARGER RATHER THAN SMALLER FIR'S. ONCE CONSOLIDATION ACCOMPLISHED MINTOFF AND QADHAFI COULD MAKE THEIR OWN ARRANGEMENTS ON LOCATION OF CENTER.

4. MATTER AT PRESENT LIES ON DESK OF VICE DIRGEN. ACTION PROPOSAL WILL BE PUT BEFORE MORO UPON HIS RETURN. IF MORO CONCURS ITALIANS WILL APPROACH BRITISH AND POSSIBLY US TO URGE THAT A WAY BE FOUND TO ACCOMMODATE MINTOFF. SUGGESTION WILL BE MADE THAT BRITISH FIND WAY TO ACCOMMODATE MINTOFF DESPITE BRITISH POSITION THAT DEVALUATION OF POUND DID NOT INCREASE BRITISH OBLIGATION. ITALIANS WILL URGE THAT BRITISH TAKE MORE FORTHCOMING VIEW IN EEC'S CONSIDERATION OF AID FOR MALTA, DESPITE BRITISH RESERVATIONS DUE TO MINTOFF'S FAILURE TO SERVICE BRITISH DEBT. IN SHORT, ITALIANS WILL CALL UPON BRITISH TO USE IMAGINATION TO FIND WAYS TO FATTEN MINTOFF'S PURSE. ITALIANS MAY ASK US TO TRY TO PERSUADE BRITISH TO GO ALONG.

5. ADDRESSESS OF COURSE AWARE OF ITALIANS' EXTREME SENSITIVITY TO PROBLEMS IN RELATIONS WITH MALTA. ITALIAN RESPONSE TO MINTOFF'S APPEAL/THREAT IS WITHIN STANDARD PATTERN. HOWEVER, COMMITMENT IN CONFIDENTIAL ANNEX TO UK/MALTA AGREEMENT CITED VALLETTA'S 2133, AND THE BUREAUCRATIC PROCEDURE NECESSARY IN CARRYING OUT EVEN THE FIRST STEP OF POSSIBLE MINTOFF/QADHAFI SCHEME, SEEM LIKELY TO DELAY IF NOT FRUSTRATE THE OPERATION. EXPERIENCE TELLS US ITALIANS NEVERTHELESS ARE LIKELY TO PUSH BRITISH AND PERHAPS OTHER ALLIES HARD. VOLPE

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** n/a  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 31 OCT 1973  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** golinofr  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1973ROME11988  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** DG ALTERED  
**Executive Order:** X1 VOLPE  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Legacy Key:** link1973/newtext/t1973102/aaaaabba.tel  
**Line Count:** 97  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE  
**Office:** ACTION EUR  
**Original Classification:** SECRET  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
**Previous Classification:** SECRET  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** ROME 11802 11867  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** golinofr  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 17 SEP 2001  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <17-Sep-2001 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <21-Nov-2001 by golinofr>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** MALTA FIR  
**TAGS:** PFOR, MT, LY, US, IT  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005